What is claimed is:

1　　1.　　A method for generalized Common Gateway Interface (CGI) processing,

2　comprising:

3　　　　(a) providing a plurality of distinct CGI forms on a server connected to a network;

4　　　　(b) receiving a plurality of distinct user requests over said network; and

5　　　　(c) responding to said requests by invoking a single, generalized CGI processing routine

6　for enabling user data corresponding to said plurality of distinct CGI forms to be entered.

1　　2.　　The method of claim 1, said step (c) comprising:

2　　　　(d) generating a parameter file from a selected CGI form corresponding to a user request;

3　and

4　　　　(e) presenting said selected CGI form on a display device, to collect user input data

5　corresponding to said selected CGI form.

1　　3.　　The method of claim 2, said step (d) comprising extracting input field names from

2　said selected CGI form.

1　　4.　　The method of claim 2, further comprising:

2　　　　reading said user input data based on said parameter file; and

3　　　　formatting said user input data for output to said user.

1　　5.　　The method of claim 4, further comprising:

2　　　　executing post-processing functions to perform additional specified operations on said user

3　input data;

4　　　　generating an output file including formatted input data and results of said operations; and

5　　　　reporting a result of said request back to said user.

1　　6.　　The method of claim 5, wherein said post-processing functions include calculations

2　based on said user input and dispatching electronic mail transmitting said output file to a targeted

3　user.

1   7.   A system comprising:

2   a network for transmitting a plurality of user requests to a server;

3   a server linked to said network, said server comprising:

4   a plurality of distinct CGI forms corresponding to said requests; and

5   generalized handling means for handling each of said plurality of distinct

6   CGI forms in response to said requests.

1   8.   The system of claim 7, said generalized handling means comprising single initial

2   data-gathering means for generating a plurality of distinct parameter files from said plurality of

3   distinct CGI forms.

1   9.   The system of claim 8, said generalized handling means further comprising single

2   action means for processing said parameter files and performing user-specified operations

3   corresponding thereto.

1   10.   The system of claim 9, said initial data-gathering means further comprising:

2   means for retrieving said distinct CGI forms from said server in response to said requests;

3   and

4   means for presenting said distinct CGI forms to a user and accepting corresponding user

5   input data.

1   11.   The system of claim 10, said action means further comprising:

2   means for reading said user input data based on said parameter files;

3   means for formatting said user input data;

4   means for calling post-processing functions to perform additional specified operations on

5   said user input data;

6   means for generating an output file including formatted input data and results of said

7   operations; and

8   means for reporting a result of a request back to a user.

1   12.   The system of claim 11, wherein said post-processing functions include calculations
2   based on said user input and dispatching electronic mail transmitting said output file to a targeted
3   user.

1   13.   In a network linking issuers of requests to a server comprising a plurality of distinct
2   CGI forms, a method comprising:
3   (a) in response to a first request, retrieving a first CGI form from said server and
4   presenting said first CGI form to an issuer of said first request;
5   (b) accepting first input data based on said first CGI form and sending said first input data
6   to said server;
7   (c) in response to a second request, retrieving a second CGI form different from said first
8   CGI form from said server, and presenting said second CGI form to an issuer of said second
9   request;
10   (d) accepting second input data based on said second CGI form and sending said second
11   input data to said server; and
12   (e) using a single CGI form handling program of said server for processing both said first
13   and second CGI forms and first and second input data.

1   14.   The method of claim 13, said step (e) comprising:
2   executing the same initial data gathering routine for each of said first and second requests,
3   said initial data gathering routine comprising the steps of:
4   parsing input fields in the corresponding CGI form to generate a parameter file;
5   displaying the corresponding CGI form on a display device; and
6   generating a submitted CGI form by recording inputs to said corresponding CGI form via
7   said display device.

1   15.   The method of claim 14, said step (e) further comprising:
2   following said initial data gathering routine, executing the same data processing routine for
3   each of said first and second requests, said data processing routine comprising the steps of:
4   (f) reading said parameter file to determine which fields of said submitted CGI form to
5   process;

6   (g) formatting data in fields determined according to step (f); and

7   (h) returning a result of said request to an issuer of said request.

1   16.   The method of claim 15, further comprising:

2   executing a post-processing program, said post-processing program performing operations

3 on said inputs; and

4   sending an output file generated by said post-processing program to an electronic mail

5 address of a target recipient.

1   17.   A computer program product tangibly embodied on a computer-usable medium, said

2 computer program product comprising computer-executable instructions which when executed

3 implement a process comprising:

4   (a) providing a plurality of distinct CGI forms on a server connected to a network;

5   (b) receiving a plurality of distinct user requests over said network; and

6   (c) responding to said requests by invoking a single, generalized CGI processing routine

7 for enabling user data corresponding to said plurality of distinct CGI forms to be entered.

1   18.   The program product of claim 17, said step (c) comprising:

2   (d) generating a parameter file from a selected CGI form corresponding to a user request;

3 and

4   (e) presenting said selected CGI form on a display device, to collect user input data

5 corresponding to said selected CGI form.

1   19.   The program product of claim 18, further comprising:

2   executing post-processing functions to perform additional specified operations on said user

3 input data;

4   generating an output file including formatted input data and results of said operations; and

5   reporting a result of said request back to said user.

1   20.   The program product of claim 19, wherein said post-processing functions include

2   calculations based on said user input and dispatching electronic mail transmitting said output file to

3   a targeted user.